

Abstract

A microwave inlet for introducing microwaves (coaxial waveguide) and a microwave launcher for generating volume-wave plasma are arranged on one side in a vacuum chamber, and a movable metal plate is arranged opposite to the microwave launcher on the other side in the vacuum chamber. The microwave launcher has a sandwiched structure where a quartz plate is sandwiched by a perforated plate having many holes of a specified diameter. Microwaves are introduced from an external microwave generator to the microwave launcher in, for example, oxygen gas, a mixture of helium gas and oxygen gas, a mixture of argon gas and oxygen gas, or a mixture of oxygen gas and nitrogen gas to change the spatial distribution of the electric field intensity, whereby the volume-wave plasma discharge is diffused to the entire inner space of the vacuum chamber by microwaves leaking through the holes in the perforated plate. The sterilizing method and the device of this invention use microwave discharge plasma that enables sterilization inside a perforated resinous package, such as a package of medical instruments in a vacuum chamber.